MINNESOTA
JUDICIAL
BRANCH




2003 ANNUAL REPORT

A Message From the Chief Justice

The Minnesota Judicial Branch enjoyed many milestones in 2003 as our judges and court personnel continue to focus on four strategic areas: Access to Justice, Children's Justice, Technology, and Public Trust and Confidence. These milestones include:

- Launching the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) in three counties and preparing to roll out the system statewide. MNCIS will link court records, improving information sharing among courts and law enforcement agencies.
- Reviewing initial data collected statewide that will help us assess racial disparities in the court system so we can work to eliminate them. We also marked the 10th anniversary of the judiciary's work toward erasing racial bias in our courts.
- Creating a statewide Guardian ad Litem system that is better able to provide abused and neglected children with advocates in court despite budget challenges and other constraints.
- Seeing concrete results from the work of the Children's Justice Initiative, the country's first statewide reform of the child protection system.

Kathleen A. Blatz, Chief Justice

- Continuing the transformation of the Judicial Branch with the transfer of the Second (Ramsey County) and Fourth (Hennepin County) judicial districts from county to state funding.

But we do not intend to rest on these accomplishments. The Judicial Branch continues to search for new opportunities to better serve the public, more effectively target the problems that bring people into court in the first place, and use our budget as efficiently as ever.

The budget challenges faced by the state in 2003 have impacted the judiciary as well. Yet, we remain committed to and focused on our overriding responsibility – our constitutionally prescribed mission of resolving the more than 2 million disputes brought to our courts each year. In doing so, we will continue to strive for a justice system that meets the highest standards of fairness and accountability, and that provides access to justice for all Minnesotans.

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Exploring Alternative Solutions to Increasing Caseloads

Each Minnesota judge handles nearly 8,000 cases a year, and the court system expects to see caseloads continue to increase. Statewide, major criminal cases alone have increased 15 percent in the past five years. Meanwhile, state revenues have decreased, forcing all branches of government to use resources more carefully. The Judicial Branch continues to search for alternative solutions to resolve disputes efficiently and that better serve the public.

Fighting Drug and Alcohol Abuse

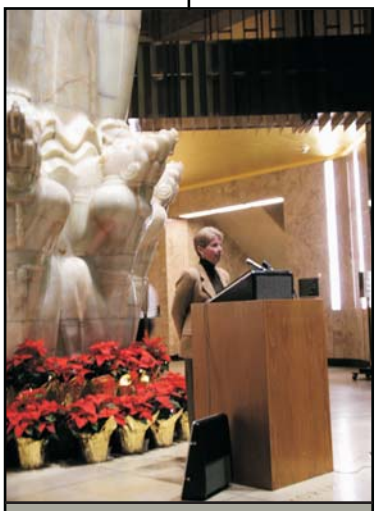
Statewide

In 2003, seven drug courts operated in Minnesota, including Hennepin County's adult program, Ramsey County's adult and juvenile programs, Dodge County's adult and juvenile programs, Stearns County's adult program and St. Louis County's adult program. Six additional counties in the state have begun planning for new drug courts, which have been found to reduce recidivism and help offenders find the help they need to get their lives back on track.

Minnesota has also formed a state drug court team that includes representatives from the courts, corrections and public safety departments, public defenders, county attorneys, state legislators and others. Team members will be trained in 2004 to support the expansion of drug courts and help develop alcohol and other drug policy.

Ramsey County

Ramsey County's Adult Substance Abuse Court received nearly $500,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice to continue its work started in October 2002. The court integrates chemical health services with the criminal justice system and uses best practices such as comprehensive assessment, gender-specific programming and skill-building programs. Once involved in the one- to two-year program, offenders must make regular court appearances, undergo substance abuse training and random urinalysis testing, abide by the laws, find a job or work toward a high school diploma, and pay restitution and program fees.



Ramsey County District Court Judge Joanne Smith announces a U.S. Department of Justice grant given to the Adult Substance Abuse Court during a press conference at the Ramsey County Courthouse.

Ramsey County's Juvenile Substance Abuse Court is in its second year and its graduates have shown a recidivism rate of about one-fifth the levels of other juvenile criminal defendants. The court has also led to longer sobriety for graduates.

Ramsey County District Court is also training and helping Hennepin and Dakota counties start their own substance abuse courts.

Chisago County

Chisago County District Court formed a countywide committee to improve how the justice system addresses juvenile chemical dependency issues. The committee includes judges, probation agents, human services personnel, prosecutors, public defenders, school officials, representatives of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, law enforcement agencies, treatment facilities and the community. The court has also taught programs about chemical abuse and has changed the juvenile court process to decrease delays between the dates of offense and the first court appearance.

Hennepin County

Hennepin County juveniles with offenses that involve chemical use are placed on a special court calendar so the court can more efficiently and effectively help them overcome their chemical dependency. As a result, young people receive chemical health assessments and referrals, and follow-up reviews in court that help them avoid future offenses.

Disputes for Families in Need

Stearns County District Court, along with the county's Volunteer Attorney Program and members of the private bar, have formed the Volunteer Family Mediation Program to provide free mediation to low-income families. The program focuses on disputes over parent-child visits and

on families seeking simplified divorces. Twenty-one attorneys, including retired Ramsey County District Judge Charles Flinn, have volunteered.

Resolving Violations, Giving Back to the Community

More than 700 people served their community to resolve outstanding adult traffic charges and misdemeanor traffic warrants during a summer Hennepin County Restorative Justice Initiative. The district court hosted the event with communities of faith, non-profit organizations, and business and neighborhood organizations.

Participants completed community service the same day the court ordered it. Representatives from various agencies were also available to help participants with driver's licenses, birth certificates, Social Security issues, legal services for Family Court, chemical health concerns, housing and employment.

District Court Judge Paul Nelson explains the Tri-County Arraignment Initiative during a press conference at the Chippewa County Courthouse in Montevideo while Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz (seated, right) and Supreme Court Justice Alan Page (seated, left) listen in.

Increasing Accountability, Saving Taxpayer Money

Sherburne County

Sherburne County District Court's Individual Assignment Calendar and other initiatives have succeeded in increasing accountability, saving taxpayer money and litigation expenses, and reducing disruption in the lives of people involved in disputes. The individual assignment calendar, in which one judge follows a case from beginning to end, has significantly reduced the number of necessary jury trials and increased the rate of early case resolutions by as much as 83 percent.

Other improvements include:

- Establishing in-court electronic calendars and computer-generated orders so judges and court staff can assign hearings with fewer conflicts and so people can immediately receive court orders;
- Creating a one-stop location for citizens to pay fines or negotiate payment schedules;
- Renovating the county law library to enhance legal research;
- Restructuring court check-in and creating a staging area for people involved in arraignment hearings to reduce courthouse confusion and congestion.

Chippewa, Lac Qui Parle, Yellow Medicine Counties

The Tri-County Arraignment Initiative, a cooperative effort among the three western Minnesota counties, has increased efficiency, reduced travel and trial costs, and led to prompt resolution of criminal cases. Under the system, arraignments are held on certain days in certain counties, which alleviates scheduling conflicts, brings all of the parties together in one location and facilitates settlement negotiations.

The result is faster case resolution and less time in court despite increasing caseloads and budget constraints. For example, while Chippewa County's major criminal filings have increased 84 percent in the past five years and minor criminal filings have increased 55 percent, the number of criminal cases resolved within four, six and 12 months remain higher than the statewide average.

Improving Criminal Court Efficiency, Security

Steele County District Court opened a fully functional courtroom in the new county detention center that will be used for prisoner-related hearings. The courtroom allows unruly prisoners to testify from behind a glass wall and through an intercom system. In addition to improving security, the courtroom will decrease the costs involved in transporting prisoners to court.

Representatives from Hennepin County District Court stop for a photo during Minnesota StandDown, an annual summer event that helps homeless veterans. Pictured above, from left, are Judge John Sommerville, Dale Kristofitz, Tamra Johnson, Mike Donlan, Elaine Briscoe, Deb Daniels, Joanne Cardenas and Connie Fischer.

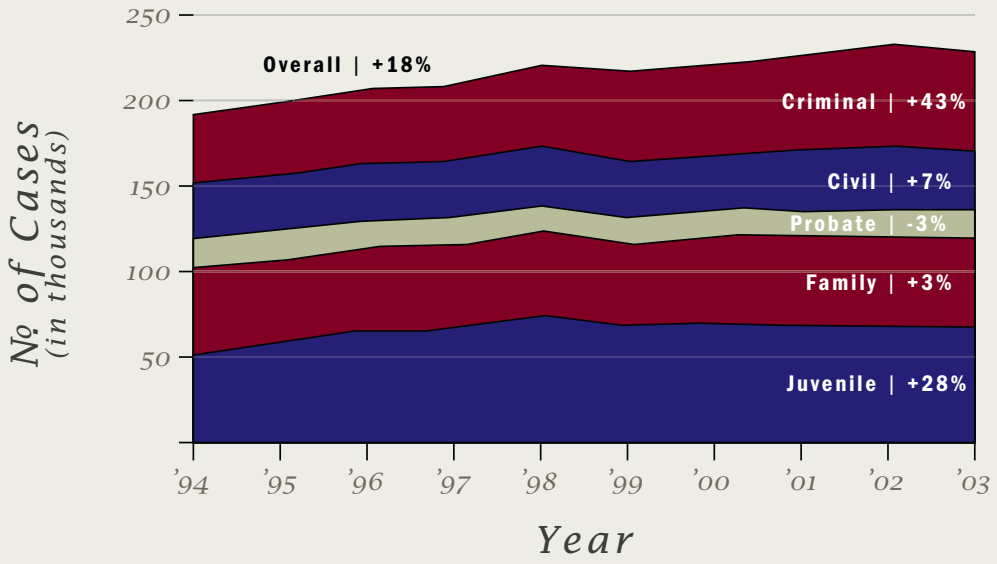
Increasing Restitution for Victims

Dakota County District Court and Community Corrections teamed up to improve fine, fee and restitution collections for gross misdemeanor and felony crimes. The effort is expected to increase restitution collection for crime victims, increase the accountability of defendants who owe fines, provide a centralized department that monitors and collects fines and reduce the amount of time probation officers must spend on fine collection.

Helping Homeless Veterans

Hennepin County District Court participated in Minnesota StandDown, an annual event that helps homeless veterans put their lives back on track. The courts provided veterans an opportunity to appear before a judge, and with the assistance of other justice agencies, fulfill their obligations to the criminal justice system. Veterans who participate are generally sentenced to minimal fines and community service, or their cases are dismissed.

Statewide Major Case Filings 1994 - 2003



Access to Justice

In order to keep pace with caseload increases and other demands beyond the control of the judiciary, the Minnesota Judicial Branch continues to seek better ways to develop and maintain its personnel, financial and service infrastructure in order to ensure the provision of, and access to, justice.

Continuing a Fundamental Transformation

The administration of Minnesota's courts is undergoing a transformation that will shift the administrative and financial responsibilities of courts in 87 counties to one state-funded system that delivers consistent judicial services statewide.

Court operations in all 55 counties located in the Fifth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth judicial districts transferred to state funding in 2000. In July 2001, the Guardian ad Litem and court interpreter programs became state funded. In 2003, Hennepin and Ramsey counties made the transition. Judicial Districts 1 and 3 will move to state funding in July 2004, and Districts 6 and 10 will follow in 2005.

As we complete the transformation from county-funded courts to a state funded and unified system, Minnesota's courts will continue to provide efficient, cost-effective and quality service to Minnesotans.

Expanding Court Interpreter Training

To ensure access to justice for Minnesota's growing population of people with limited English speaking skills, Minnesota's Court Interpreter Program offered certification exams in six new languages - Arabic, Chinese-Mandarin, Laotian, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole and Cantonese. Somali, Hmong and Spanish exams are planned for 2004.

St. Louis County District Court Judge Carol Person speaks during the dedication of the Clayton, Jackson, McGhie Memorial in Duluth. The memorial remembers three African American men who were wrongfully accused of a crime and then lynched by a mob in the early 1900s.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz and Eighth Judicial District Chief Judge Steven Drange recognize the Swift County Board of Commissioners for their dedication to providing updated court facilities at the Swift County Courthouse in Litchfield.

Public Trust and Confidence

While most Minnesotans have confidence in the Minnesota Judicial Branch, they remain concerned about the timeliness and cost of bringing cases to court, and the judiciary's treatment of persons of color. We remain committed to assessing public perspectives and educating citizens about the system and its challenges. Judicial Branch outreach programs reached more than 8,000 people in 2003. In addition to those who participated in special events, hundreds of students and adults visited the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul and district courthouses across the state to observe court and meet with judges.

Studying Racial Disparities

- In 2001, the Judicial Branch began collecting self-reported race data in every criminal and juvenile case at first appearance. Minnesota is the first and only court system in the country to do so. The goal is to ensure accountability to all Minnesotans regardless of race, to allow the courts to identify racial disparities in the system and to change the practices that lead to disparities.

  In 2003, the court system released initial data that summarized adult major criminal filings and juvenile felony, gross misdemeanor and misdemeanor case filings. Future reports will track the cases filed and then look at disposition and sentencing. The Judicial Branch intends to continue collecting race data so we can watch trends and examine impacts of new legislation and other factors related to people of color in the justice system.

- In January 2003, Ramsey County District Court released a study that showed defendants' race information does not factor into judges' decisions during the pre-trial phase of criminal court. The study looked at judicial decisions in relation to race, the defendant's prior history and the defendant's score on a bail evaluation tool. Starting in 2001, the study reviewed 235 pre-trial evaluation forms. Full results are available at www.courts.state.mn.us in the *News* section.

Observing a Decade of Work to Erase Racial Disparities

Several bar and public events marked the 10th anniversary of the Minnesota Supreme Court Task Force on Racial Bias in the Judicial System report, which recommended ways in which the Judicial Branch should improve access to justice for all Minnesotans and erase racial disparities. The events included:

- A program called Forging Ahead: Creating a Racially Fair Future for the Courts at Hamline University in St. Paul. It included an explanation of the court system's Race Data Collection Project, a presentation about the Council on Crime and Justice and the University of Minnesota Law School Institute on Race and Poverty's Minnesota Statewide Racial Profiling Report, and discussions about how the justice system can become more racially fair in the future.
- Attorney education about progress since the Task Force Report.
- Speeches by Supreme Court Justice Alan Page, Chair of the Implementation Committee for Multicultural Diversity and Racial Fairness in the Courts, to the Eighth Circuit Judicial Conference in Minneapolis and other public groups.
- Community forums in Cloquet, Duluth and Minneapolis, during which judges and criminal justice representatives explained efforts to eliminate racial disparities in the courts. They also received public suggestions for improvements and answered questions.

Surveying Customer Satisfaction

Hennepin County District Court became one of the first courts in the country to survey court customers about whether they felt their treatment in court was fair. Research suggests that defendants and plaintiffs who believed the judge listened to them and treated them fairly were more likely to follow a judge's order than those who had less confidence in the system.

During 2003, the Hennepin County District Court:

- Studied judges' behavior by interviewing 150 attorneys, and an additional 25 court employees and non-attorneys for each district court judge. The information will be used internally to improve judges' professional development and continuing education.
- Interviewed drug court participants about their continued contact with the court after sentencing and while on probation.
- Surveyed customers who contest parking and traffic tickets at the court's hearing office. The surveys focused on customer service issues, such as how much time citizens waited in line and how staff members treated them.

- Interviewed plaintiffs and respondents about their understanding of family court order for protection rulings. The study compared peoples' responses to a judge's full explanations of rulings and to rulings given without explanation.
- Assessed juveniles and family members in juvenile court to see if they are left with a better feeling about court following a brief orientation given prior to their first appearance.

Study results will be tabulated in 2004.

Keeping in Touch with the Community

Judges from the Minnesota Court of Appeals and Supreme Court, as well as their law clerks and staff members, served lunch to nearly 350 people in need at the Dorothy Day Center in St. Paul. The first-time barbecue, paid for by the judges who participated, allowed judges and court staff to get out from behind the bench and reach out to the community.

Reaching Out to Communities of Color

Minnesota judges teamed up with Minneapolis Patrick Henry High School and the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans to discuss justice issues with students and their families. Judges, students and family members met during a formal program about family law and participated in roundtable discussions about immigration, criminal law, law enforcement and justice issues during a potluck Asian dinner. The evening program followed a full day of student sessions as part of a special issues day in which students signed up for seminars.

Preparing Jurors for Service

State Court Administration unveiled a new jury service video that better prepares jurors for service in court. The 11-minute video was created from the juror's point of view and provides information about jury summons and selection, and what happens during a trial and jury deliberations.

Highlighting Innovations

For the past four years, Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz has visited judicial districts to learn from the experiences of concerned citizens across the state. The "Court Innovations Tours" also allow her to meet with trial court judges, administrators and local attorneys, increase public awareness of the judiciary's challenges and highlight local court innovations. Tours include community events, meetings with local criminal justice organizations and panel discussions highlighting new justice initiatives. In 2003, the Chief Justice visited West Central Minnesota's Eighth Judicial District.

Mentoring the Next Generation

Legal Expo

Nearly 700 Minnesota students and their teachers learned about the justice system from judges during the annual Legal Expo in Brooklyn Center. The presentations included information about juvenile crime and the juvenile justice system, the role of judges and the structure of the Judicial Branch. Students also participated in a "You Be the Judge" activity in which they ruled on mock cases.

Court of Appeals Judge R.A. "Jim" Randall (center) and appellate court law clerks barbecue lunch for people in need at the Dorothy Day Center in downtown St. Paul.

Traveling Oral Arguments

In an effort to teach Minnesotans about the courts, the Supreme Court continued its tradition of holding oral arguments in schools across the state. Twice a year, the Court hears oral arguments of actual cases in schools and then opens the program to questions from students in attendance and watching via television. Attorneys from local bar associations volunteer to review case briefs and prepare students for oral arguments.

The Court visited Morris in spring 2003 and Winona in the fall. Both visits included dinners open to the public. The events allowed judges to meet the people they serve and learn about the challenges and innovations of the justice system across the state. Nearly 4,000 students and adults participated in the visits.

Law Day

Almost 600 Hibbing and Virginia students celebrated Law Day on May 1 by touring Sixth Judicial District courthouses and meeting judges. Virginia students in grades 3-12 learned about courtrooms from judges, including the 1910 Virginia Courthouse's unique double-seated witness stand used by interpreters in the early 1900s when many residents did not speak English. Older students focused on the importance of an independent judiciary.

Supreme Court Justice Helen Meyer speaks to students at Minnewaska Secondary School in Glenwood as part of the Supreme Court's Traveling Oral Arguments program.

Supreme Court Justice Russell Anderson shares dinner with a Minneapolis resident during a potluck Asian dinner at Minneapolis Patrick Henry High School. The dinner was organized as an opportunity for judges and members of the Asian community to talk about justice issues.

Other Law Day events across the state included:

- Supreme Court Justice James Gilbert and Brown County District Court Judge John Rodenberg speaking to nearly 200 sixth-grade students in New Ulm.
- Goodhue County judges speaking to local Civics classes and helping celebrate the local law library's first Law Day Poster Contest.
- Dakota County recognizing its jurors by proclaiming May 1 Law Day and Juror Appreciation Day.
- Kanabec County District Court hosting programs for 135 Mora students, including mock trials planned by judges and court staff.
- Jackson County District Court Judge Linda Titus and local attorneys meeting with Jackson students to discuss the Bill of Rights and other legal issues.
- Counties in Northwest Minnesota's Ninth Judicial District hosting students at various locations for an interactive television presentation by Supreme Court Justice Russell Anderson and Court of Appeals Chief Judge Edward Toussaint.

Children's Justice

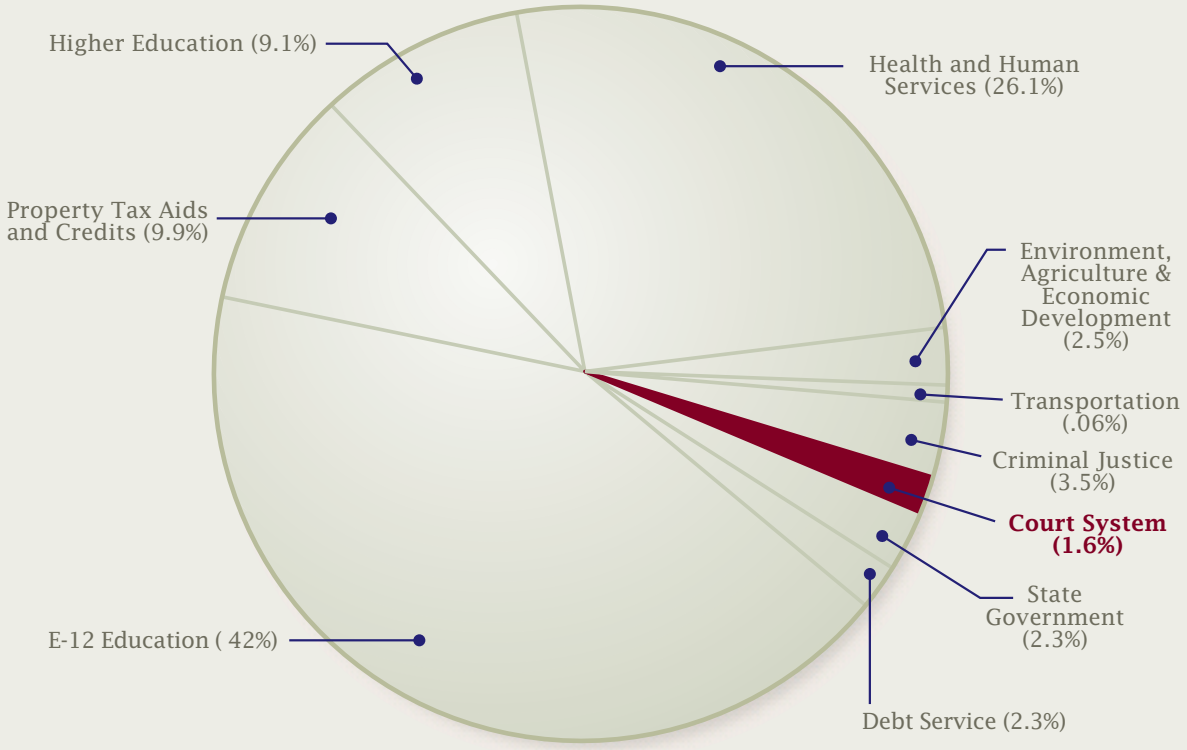
The Minnesota Judicial Branch recognizes the strong links between childhood maltreatment and juvenile delinquency, and adult crime. Statistics indicating more than 75 percent of our nation's prison inmates have had contact with the child protection system demand that we do a better job handling child protection cases when they are first in our courts. In 2003, the Minnesota Judicial Branch continued its plan to reform the system.

Seeing "Through the Eyes of the Child"

Minnesota counties not yet involved in the Children's Justice Initiative began preparing to kick off their involvement in 2004. Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz and the Minnesota Department of Human Services Commissioner started the Initiative in 2001 with the hopes of improving child protection case processing and providing permanent homes for maltreated children through reunification with their birth families or placement with another family in a more timely manner.

Lead judges in participating counties form teams from juvenile court, social services departments, county attorneys' and public defenders' offices, court administration, Guardian ad Litem programs, and others involved in child abuse and neglect cases. Each team studies how its county currently

Where Minnesota's General Fund Dollars Go 2004-2005 Biennium



processes child protection cases. Using national best practices guidelines, the teams then implement changes to better meet the needs of children. By the end of 2004, all 87 Minnesota counties will participate in the country's first statewide child protection court reform effort.

To date, the Initiative has led to many changes in Minnesota's courts, including:

- Training about people's roles in the system, the Indian Child Welfare Act and Title IV-E for professionals and community members involved in child protection cases.
- Eliminating the "cattle call" scheduling of child protection cases and instead scheduling date- and time-certain court hearings that decrease delay.
- Implementing a "one judge, one family" system, which allows a judge to become better acquainted with a case, and places the responsibility for case management and future court hearings in the judge's hands.
- Developing child protection forms and procedures that give families information about services available to them early on in child protection proceedings.
- Issuing orders at the end of each hearing or decreasing the time for completing orders so the parties clearly understand what occurred in court.
- Pilot testing model order templates that are easier for parties to understand. The templates will be distributed to all judges and county attorneys statewide.
- Using "family group decision making" to improve the quality and amount of services given to families, and to settle cases earlier so children reach permanency.

Improving Adoption Programs

The Olmsted County Children's Justice Initiative (CJI) received recognition from the National Center for Adoption Law and Policy for its contributions to improving adoption timelines. Federal standards state that when children are available for adoption, they should be placed with a family within two years. Olmsted County met this standard about 31 percent of the time in 2000, but due to CJI and other efforts, the rate increased to almost 92 percent in 2002.

CJI strengthened the court processes involved in adoption by improving court scheduling, instituting a no-continuance policy and creating a parallel protection process. During the parallel protection process, settlement conferences occur in all child protection cases that do not involve the termination of parental rights. The conferences provide an opportunity for parties to discuss their concerns and ask questions early in the court process. The results are quicker and result in more meaningful settlements.

Advocating for Children

Minnesota's Guardian ad Litem program, which provides advocates who represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in court, underwent improvements in 2003. When the Guardian ad Litem system was county funded, guardians represented only 60 percent of abused and neglected children in 2000, though state and federal law had required 100 percent coverage for 25 years. Following the transfer of the Guardian ad Litem system to state funding, and thanks to the commitment of judges, court staff, the Legislature and efforts to recruit guardians, Minnesota closed the gap and currently provides Guardians for nearly 90 percent of abused and neglected children. Our goal is to reach 100 percent coverage by 2005, as resources and budget allow.

The court continues to build a Guardian ad Litem system that is state funded, supervised and supported with consistent training and oversight, judicial district administered, and locally operated. Minnesota has become a national role model because it requires Guardians to undergo extensive training prior to their first appointment, attend continuing education programs, and conduct investigations and evaluations according to preset standards. In addition, we:

- Developed a statewide administrative structure of 10 district Guardian ad Litem programs that replaced 56 different local programs. The change has promoted consistent policy and practice, and ensures accountability.
- Completed a standard Guardian ad Litem contract that meets legal standards, ensures quality service delivery and more efficiently uses budget resources.
- Implemented a Guardian ad Litem database that improves system management and provides reliable information about the state's Guardian needs.
- Appoint Guardians and counsel for parents earlier in the court process.
- Require Guardians and social workers statewide to serve and file their reports at least five working days prior to a scheduled hearing so the judge and parties will be better prepared for court.

Improving Technology

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has initiated major change in its use of technology. Through the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) and other projects, the courts are operating more efficiently and tracking more reliable and up-to-date data. This will lead to improved policy evaluations and a greater ability to respond to public requests. These improvements will give judges and court staff the information they need to protect public safety and provide system accountability.

Introducing MNCIS

When the current Judicial Branch automated case management system was built, Jimmy Carter had just completed his presidency and the Court of Appeals did not yet exist. Times have changed and our computer system cannot keep up. It is out-of-date, poorly integrated and difficult to use. According to a recent Legislative Auditor's report, about 62 percent of chronic offenders are convicted in multiple counties. However, "information on criminal activity is scattered among several databases, making it difficult to compile a complete criminal history of each offender."

In 2003, the Judicial Branch began to implement the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS), which will link court records across the state and significantly improve the collection, storage, tracking and sharing of court information.

Early in 2003, Carver County District Court put MNCIS to use for the first time and tested critical links with CriMNet. MNCIS will serve as the anchor tenant of the state's new CriMNet integrated criminal justice information project. The technology was later introduced in Hennepin County Probate Court (December 2003) and Blue Earth County District Court (January 2004). Meanwhile, court technology teams prepared to introduce MNCIS in additional counties in 2004. By the end of fiscal year 2006, all 87 counties in the state will use the system to link court records.

Improving Customer Service

Hennepin County District Court now allows defendants with traffic and criminal citations to access information about the citation and pay fines by phone or online at www2.co.hennepin.mn.us/evibes/. The change streamlines payment processing, allows the public to more easily pay citations, avoids mailing delays that can result in late fees and frees up staff time to complete other court-related work.

Accessing Court Calendars Online

The district courts in Stearns and Washington counties have joined courts in Olmsted, St. Louis, Hennepin and other counties in posting court calendars on the Internet. The move increases public access to court calendars and helps alleviate scheduling conflicts and confusion. Stearns County District Court calendars can be found at www.courts.state.mn.us/districts/seventh/ct_calendars.htm. Washington County District Court calendars are available at www.courts.state.mn.us/districts/tenth/.

Hennepin County District Court Judge Kathryn Quaintance discusses juvenile court issues with Twin Cities students during the annual Legal Expo program in Brooklyn Center.

Supreme Court

Seven justices make up the Minnesota Supreme Court, the state's court of last resort. The Court hears appeals from the Minnesota Court of Appeals, the Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals and the Tax Court. Justices hear attorney and judge discipline matters and all first-degree murder conviction appeals from the district courts. Supreme Court Justices also oversee the administration of the Judicial Branch by serving as liaisons to the state's 10 judicial districts, and to various boards and task forces that set policy and study justice system issues.

Supreme Court Justices

Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz
1998 - Present
(Associate Justice 1996 – 1998)

Associate Justice Alan Page
1993 – Present

Associate Justice Paul Anderson
1994 – Present

Associate Justice James Gilbert
1998 – Present

Associate Justice Russell Anderson
1998 – Present

Associate Justice Helen Meyer
August 2002 – Present

Associate Justice Sam Hanson
September 2002 – Present

Supreme Court Dispositions 2003

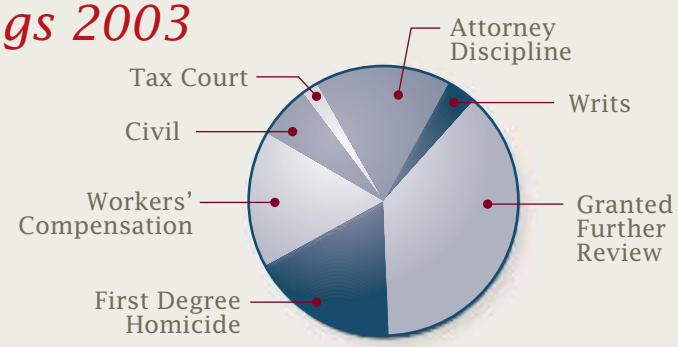
Disposition	2003
PFR Denied	530
Affirmed	70
Modified	2
Reversed	52
Mixed	36
Dismissed	23
Other	19
Total Dispositions	**732**

Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz (left) and State Court Administrator Sue Dosal (right) speak to students over lunch at Winona High School following the Supreme Court's Traveling Oral Arguments program.

Supreme Court Justice Sam Hanson speaks to Winona area residents during a "Meet Your Court" dinner at Winona State University.

Supreme Court Filings 2003

Workers' Compensation	34
Civil	13
Tax Court	5
Attorney Discipline	34
Writs	7
Granted Further Review	76
First Degree Homicide	36
	205



Court of Appeals

The Minnesota Court of Appeals hears appeals from the state's district courts and other agencies. The Court's 16 judges work in rotating three-judge panels and hear cases in St. Paul and across greater Minnesota. The Court strives to provide Minnesotans with impartial, clear and timely appellate decisions made according to law.

Despite an increase in filings and statewide budget challenges, the Court remains a national model of efficient case processing and delay reduction. It has also become one of the more diverse appellate courts in the country, with nearly one-third of its judges being women and three judges of color.

Celebrating History

The Minnesota Court of Appeals celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2003. Before the Court was created, the court system had experienced much delay and the State Supreme Court – the only court handling appeals at the time – could not keep up with rapidly increasing caseloads. After years of work and public education by the court system, nearly 80 percent of Minnesota voters approved the constitutional amendment that established the Court of Appeals in 1983.

To transition into the Court, Court of Appeals judges took oaths of office in two groups. Judges Daniel Foley, Harriet Lansing, D.D. Wozniak, Edward Parker, Suzanne Sedgwick and Chief Judge Peter Popovich were sworn in on November 2, 1983. Though the second group of judges – Judges Gary Crippen, Roger Nierengarten, Thomas Forsberg, Doris Huspeni, David Leslie and R.A. "Jim" Randall – did not take their oaths until April 2, 1984, all 12 helped establish court procedures from the beginning. Four judges were eventually added to the Court to handle increasing caseloads. Of the founding members, Judges Lansing and Randall still serve as full-time judges and Judges Crippen, Huspeni and Forsberg serve the Court as retired judges.

Since its beginning, the Court of Appeals has met its mandate of issuing opinions within 90 days of oral argument. In recent years, the Court has resolved about 2,000 cases per year.

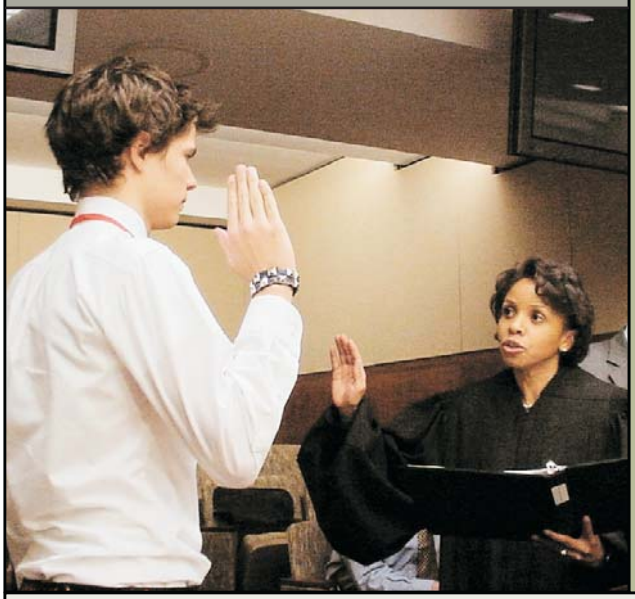
"The Court in the early days worked productively in the face of uncertainty, inventing ourselves as we established procedures and faced forward into the cases and the challenges of those formative times," said Judge Lansing during the November 2003 anniversary celebration in St. Paul. "We learned that success takes time, but we developed an integrity of effort, a commitment to the task that continues to characterize us as a court."

Court of Appeals Judge Thomas Kalitowski speaks to constituents of Minnesota Representative Denny McNamara during their visit to the Minnesota Judicial Center in St. Paul.

Court of Appeals Dispositions 2003

Disposition	2003
Affirmed	1045
Modified	28
Reversed	286
Mixed	165
Dismissed	549
Other	113
Total Dispositions	**2186**

Court of Appeals Judge Wilhelmina Wright gives the oath of office to a participant in the YMCA Youth in Government mock government program at the Minnesota State Capitol campus.



Court of Appeals Judges

Chief Judge Edward Toussaint, Jr.
1995 – Present

Judge Harriet Lansing
1983 – Present

Judge R. A. "Jim" Randall
1984 – Present

Judge Thomas Kalitowski
1987 – Present

Judge Robert Schumacher
1987 – Present

Judge Roger Klaphake
1989 – Present

Judge Randolph Peterson
1990 – Present

Judge James Harten
1992 – Present

Judge Bruce Willis
1995 – Present

Judge Gordon Shumaker
1998 – Present

Judge G. Barry Anderson
1998 – Present

Judge Jill Flaskamp Halbrooks
1998 – Present

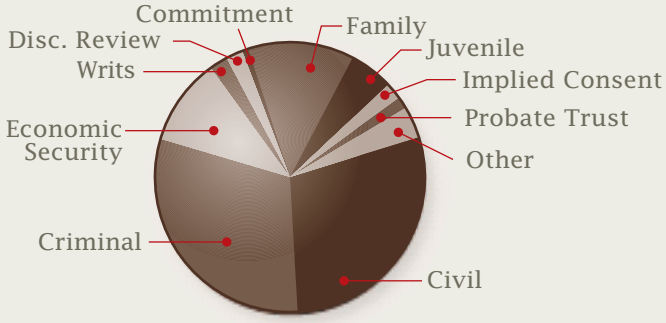
Judge Terri Stoneburner
2000 – Present

Judge David Minge
May 2002 – Present

Judge Natalie Hudson
June 2002 – Present

Judge Wilhelmina Wright
September 2002 – Present

Court of Appeals Filings 2003



Family	299
Juvenile	118
Implied Consent	41
Probate Trust	40
Other	91
Civil	670
Criminal	723
Economic Security	250
Writs	52
Disc. Review	44
Commitment	18
	2346

District Courts

The more than 2 million cases per year that are filed in Minnesota's Judicial Branch begin in the state's district courts. The 274 district court judges, divided amongst 10 judicial districts, handle a wide variety of civil and criminal matters.

District Court Judges Who Left the Bench in 2003:

- Scott County District Court Judge Eugene Atkins
- Cass County District Court Judge Michael Haas
- Scott County District Court Judge Thomas Howe
- Dakota County District Court Judge Thomas Murphy
- St. Louis County District Court Judge Jeffry Rantala
- McLeod County District Court Judge LeRoy Yost

New Judges in 2003

- Cass County District Court Judge David Harrington (elected)
- Scott County District Court Judge Carol Hooten (elected)
- Goodhue County District Court Judge Kevin Mark (new judgeship)
- Morrison County District Court Judge John Scherer (new judgeship)

Current District Court Chief Judges


Judge Richard Spicer 1


Judge Gary Pagliaccetti 6


Judge J. Thomas Mott 2

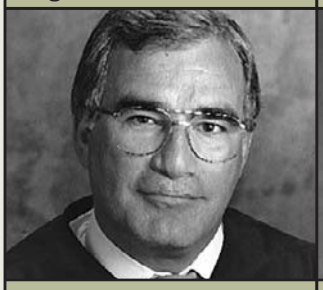

Judge Vicki Landwehr 7

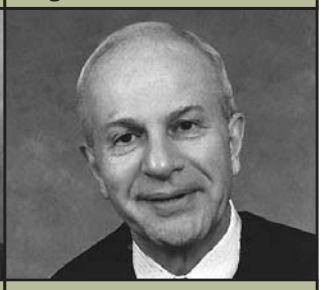

Judge Renee Worke 3


Judge Steven Drange 8


Judge Kevin Burke 4


Judge John Smith 9


Judge Norbert Smith 5


Judge R. Joseph Quinn 10